



Maine School IPM Fact Sheet

Ant Pest Management



Ants are often considered pests in Maine schools because they are unwelcome visitors inside buildings. Since most ants do not pose a serious threat to human health or property a common sense approach to managing them should be taken. Indoor infestations are best treated or better yet, prevented, by practicing good sanitation and maintenance to keep ants from wandering indoors in search of food and water. It is usually not advisable or effective to apply pesticides to floors or baseboards indoors or as a perimeter treatment outdoors.

Preventative measures include:

- clean up food and drink spills promptly
- keep pet and human food in pest-proof containers
- empty trash frequently
- rinse and store recyclable cans and bottles in pest-proof containers
- trim shrubs, trees and grass touching building
- clean gutters
- repair leaks and condensation problems promptly
- caulk cracks and keep screens, weather-stripping, door sweeps in good repair.

Carpenter ants can cause considerable damage to buildings and should be eliminated when found in buildings. They are usually black and tend to be somewhat large (up to 1/2" long). Carpenter ants are often encountered in trees, stumps, and rotting logs outdoors but will come into schools buildings in search of food, water and nesting sites.

- Inspect trees and stumps near buildings at night for carpenter ant activity.
- Infested stumps and trees located near building should be removed.
- When nests do occur in buildings they are usually in association with moisture problems such as roof or plumbing leaks. Inspect attics, window sills and frames, porches, around sinks and dishwashers, foundations sills, to detect and repair leaks or condensation problems. Small piles of wood particles and/or dead ants found near any of these areas are an indication of carpenter ant nesting activity.
- The key to eliminating carpenter ants is to locate and remove (or treat) the nest. This is usually a job for a professional exterminator.

Outdoors. All ants can bite when disturbed therefore, ant nests sometimes present a hazard to children on playgrounds. This is especially true for the European red ant, a species found in a few isolated coastal locations in Maine, including Mount Desert Island and Cape Elizabeth. These ants cause a very painful bite thereby presenting a special concern if found on school grounds. Seek assistance from a pest control professional for treatment of European red ant nests.

For other ant nests found on school grounds where children are at risk from bites, the following method can be used.

- Mix a solution of soapy water (3-4 tablespoons of liquid dish soap/gallon water) in 5-gallon plastic buckets.
- Standing a foot away from the nest (wear long pants or coveralls and tuck pant legs into socks to avoid ant bites), slowly pour soapy water into the nest. Have a partner poke holes in the nest with a stick and continue pouring water in. Continue using the stick to open the mound and pour more soapy water until no more live ants are seen.
- Excavate the nest with a shovel and pour more soapy water into depression.